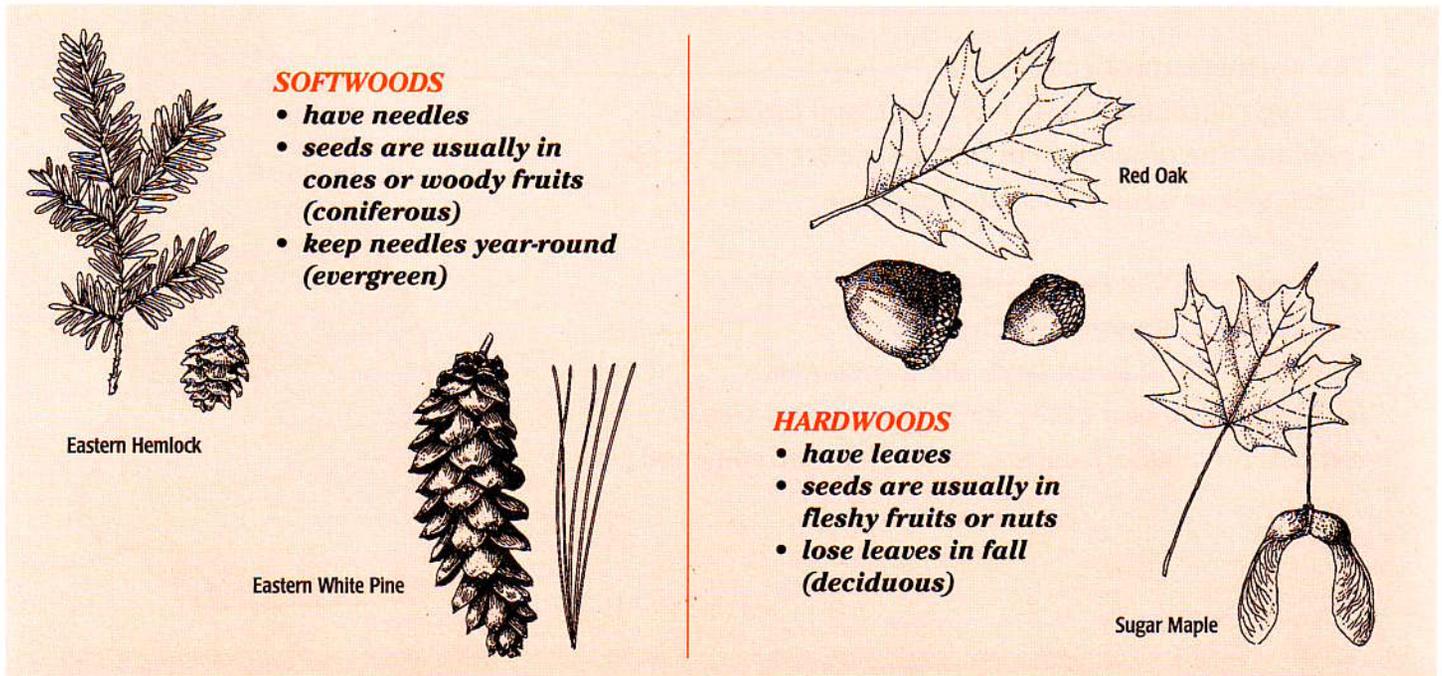


# What Is A Forest?

More goes on in a forest than you may realize. A forest is a complex, living system, and each one is unique. They're valuable, too, in several ways. Forests help clean water and air, and they provide wildlife habitat, beautiful scenery, recreation, and forest products. Forests also serve as a living record of natural and human history.

## Tree Species In New Hampshire

With 74 native tree species, New Hampshire's forests are more diverse than almost any other in North America. Our forests include 12 softwood species and 62 hardwood species.



## Forests As Natural Communities

Trees and other plants grow together in groups called *natural communities*. These groupings are based on preferences for similar types of soil, water, and climate. The plants, animals, and microbes in each natural community interact closely. The alpine zone, found in the upper elevations of the mountains, is one natural community, and estuaries along the coast are another.

New Hampshire has about 130 natural communities. Nearly a third are forest communities, some of which can cover large areas. Many other smaller natural communities, such as bogs, cedar swamps, or meadows, can be found within New Hampshire's forest communities.

**A "riverside seep" is an example of a small natural community.**



credit: Caren Caljow for NH Natural Heritage Inventory



## Forest Cover Types

Though forests are natural communities, foresters and others also classify forests into broad regions called *forest cover types*. Most of New Hampshire's forest land can be found within three forest cover types, each named for its primary tree species.

### The Spruce and Fir Forest

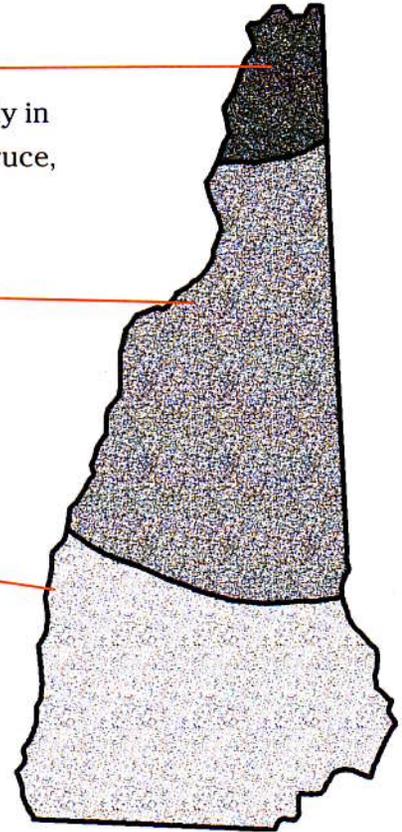
This type encompasses 14% of the forest land and is found primarily in the state's northern three counties. The dominant trees are red spruce, white spruce, black spruce, balsam fir, white cedar, and tamarack.

### The Northern Hardwood Forest

This type encompasses 42% of forest land throughout the state. The primary trees in this type are sugar maple, beech, yellow birch, and some red maple.

### The Oak and Pine Forest

This type encompasses much of the remaining 44% of forest land, and grows mostly in the southern part of the state. The primary trees are red oak, red maple, hemlock, white pine, and some red pine.



## Question

Describe the forest around your school or your home. What types of trees, plants, and other living things do you find? Are they consistent with the forest cover type depicted on the map?

To help interpret the information on this factsheet, turn to the *Project Learning Tree PreK-8 Activity Guide!*

## PLT Activity #8: The Forest Of S. T. Shrew

By taking a shrew's-eye view of life in the woods, students gain an appreciation for the variety of living things in a forest, and for the variety of habitats within forests.



## Fun Fact

Tamaracks, found mostly in wet areas, have needles and not leaves, but unlike other softwoods, they lose all their needles every fall. They are properly called *deciduous* trees, just like maples, oaks, and birches.